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SIPDIS

EUR/RPM FOR JESSICA FISHER

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TAGS: [OSCE](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY INPUT FOR OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING

REF: SECSTATE 59944

[¶1.](#) (U) Summary. Mission Turkey proposes including the following points in the statements prepared by the US mission to the OSCE for the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in the fall of 2009.

Tolerance and Non-Discrimination

[¶2.](#) (U) Officials in Turkey have begun to pursue a comprehensive approach to address the social, political, and economic problems that the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has tried to use as a justification for terrorism. We welcome the steps Turkey has taken to expand Kurdish broadcasting by opening a Kurdish language public television station. We also welcome steps the government has taken to establish Kurdish language faculties/institutes at several universities. Additionally, the Turkish government has pledged greater support to its Alevi population. We hope the Turkish government will continue these efforts in line with its OSCE commitments.

Freedom of Thought, Conscience, or Religious Belief

[¶3.](#) (U) Religious communities in Turkey continue to face government and legal obstacles in opening, maintaining, and operating recognized houses of worship. We urge the Government of Turkey to take steps to end such legal hurdles so that all religious groups in Turkey can legally gather in their places of worship.

[¶4.](#) (U) The Turkish Government has made significant steps in recognizing the property rights of religious communities in its amended foundations law. The laws need to be fully implemented and amendments made to address properties sold to third parties in the past. We also urge the Government of Turkey to reopen the Halki Seminary, which has been closed since 1971.

[¶5.](#) (U) We urge the Government to remove the religious identification requirement on national identity cards. We will continue to monitor closely the trials in Turkey regarding the murder of Armenian Turk Hrant Dink and the Christians murdered in Malatya in 2007.

[¶6.](#) (U) Bans or limitations on religious expression continue to arise in a diverse array of countries, including Greece, Turkey and France. The United States recognizes that governments must balance competing priorities and interests when addressing the extent to which religion and religious symbols should be manifest in public institutions. We think the better approach is to respect, wherever possible, an individual's choice to manifest his or her religion, including through attire or other displays of religious symbols, in schools or other government buildings.

¶17. (U) In the OSCE's 1989 Vienna Document, participating states agreed to "fully respect the right of everyone to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state, and to leave any country." In the OSCE's 1991 Moscow Document, participating States further agreed to "remove all legal and other restrictions with respect to travel within their territories and for their own nationals and foreigners."

¶18. (U) The United States is very grateful for the assistance Turkish authorities provided over the past twelve months to facilitate the timely resettlement to the United States of 2100 Iraq refugees who had sought temporary asylum in Turkey. At the same time, however, we are concerned that Turkey's laws still require exit permission before refugees, who have no durable solution in Turkey, are allowed to depart Turkey for resettlement in third countries.

¶19. (U) One obstacle to gaining an exit permit is the resident permit fee that Turkish regulations require refugees, who are often the poorest members of society and who cannot obtain legal employment in Turkey, to pay before they can depart for resettlement to a third country. In some cases, families have been charged thousands of dollars in residence fees before they were allowed to depart Turkey. While other OSCE countries recognize that refugees' humanitarian situation should make them exempt from such fees, Turkey charges late fines when refugees cannot pay fees on time. Although a "humanitarian waiver" of the fees is available under Turkish law, it is not consistently applied, even for single mothers

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or for elderly or disabled refugees.

¶10. (U) Turkish regulations also require that refugees get special permission from police before they can travel outside the provincial towns to which they are assigned for residence. These restrictions sometimes hinder refugees' ability to appear for UNHCR interviews or for resettlement interviews at embassies in Ankara, or to travel to the airport in Istanbul to depart the country. These restrictions violate OSCE commitments to freedom of movement and exacerbate the refugees' already difficult humanitarian situation.

¶11. (U) Additionally, within the last year, the Turkish government has stopped providing UNHCR access to migrants apprehended before they are registered with the police or UNHCR. This makes it impossible to determine who may be qualified asylum seekers.

WIENER